

An HBW Project: The Black Literary Suite (BLS)

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History of Black Writing

“Black Book Interactive Project III”

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Project Summary

The Black Literary Suite (BLS) was the History of Black Writing's (HBW) exhibit dedicated to:

- Introducing the community to lesser-known figures in Black literature;
- Showcasing HBW's collection and research; and
- Presenting the history of Black writers in new and innovative ways.

Accordingly, BLS was an opportunity for members of the HBW student staff to collaborate, learn, and refine their research skills. Ten BLS exhibits were mounted from 2011-2022 during the time period when HBW's institutional home was the University of Kansas (KU).

BLS exhibitions typically included the following components:

- Visual – Our displays included informative posters for an in-person exhibit or an interactive map, timeline, etc. for an online digital display. The visual component was a main vehicle to share information on the books and authors featured in the exhibit and often featured brief summaries of the books or short author biographies, images, quotes, and other information related to each BLS theme.
- Bibliography – HBW highlighted a collection of titles related to the theme that informed the exhibit. The bibliography was typically shared with the public as a resource. Titles came from and/or were added to HBW's larger collection.
- Audio – Early BLS exhibits featured pre-recorded audio on MP3 players for a self-guided tour experience while more recent exhibits included a podcast.
- Keynote Address or Panel – The exhibitions featured a scholar in the BLS theme's field or a panel of experts. This exhibit element was hosted on the KU campus or online via Zoom. HBW widely promoted this public event as a way to draw attention to the exhibit.
- Reception – With the goal of connecting with the community and fostering discussion of and engagement with lesser-known figures in Black literature, the BLS typically included a light reception following the keynote address or panel.
- Campus Collaboration – KU units like the Kansas Union or Libraries provided exhibit and/or reception space. Campus partnerships were utilized to help fund speakers, support reception costs, and promote BLS.

BLS exhibits were led by one or more Graduate Student Coordinators and the themes aligned with their respective area(s) of research interest. Undergraduate student staff provided research support, drafted written components, and contributed design ideas. A KU design staff member and/or a freelance graphic designer built the digital exhibit and created display posters as well as any promotional materials. All work was overseen by the HBW Faculty Director with support from the HBW Research Project Manager.

First launched in 2011, to date HBW has mounted ten BLS exhibits on a variety of subjects. After each BLS exhibit "closed," the content was archived at KU ScholarWorks, KU's digital repository. More broadly, KU ScholarWorks contains scholarly work created by KU faculty,

staff, and students. The repository makes important research and historical items available to a wider audience and helps assure their long-term preservation.

Links to BLS archives in ScholarWorks:

- [BLS 2022: Black Beyond Borders](#)
- [BLS 2020: Black Writing in Reel Time](#)
- [BLS 2019: Researching While Black](#)
- [BLS 2018: Reclaiming the Black Body, Women Writing Women](#)
- [BLS 2017: Mississippi Renaissance](#)
- [BLS 2016: Sports Figures with a Kansas Connection](#)
- [BLS 2015: Kansas Authors Edition](#)
- [BLS 2013: Histories of African American Short Stories, A Digital Humanities Exhibit](#)
- [BLS 2012: Wikipedia Edition](#)
- [BLS 2011: New York Edition](#)

Project Origins and Goals

In 2010, HBW had been at KU for 10 years and in that time had mounted The Langston Hughes Centennial Conference—the largest ever conference devoted to Hughes’s life and work—published the *Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, started the Language Matters teaching initiative in collaboration with the Toni Morrison Society, hosted the “Making the (Richard) Wright Connection” NEH Summer Institute for high school teachers, and more. HBW would continue at this same intense and ambitious pace for the next twelve years, hosting multiple summer programs focused on professional development and creating the Black Book Interactive Project (BBIP) while working to rapidly grow HBW’s novel database and digital collection.

At the same time, a cohort of new graduate students from HBCUs had matriculated to KU to study Black literature and recognized HBW with its archive and novel database as a rich resource on campus that nobody seemed to know about. Graduate student Kenton Ramsby proposed an exhibit looking at common patterns that he noticed in certain kinds of texts to showcase aspects of HBW to the broader campus and community. Student-directed from the start, the exhibit provided an opportunity for student staff to collaborate on a project they were invested in and for HBW to build campus partnerships and increase public engagement. After the success of the first Black Literary Suite in 2011, HBW recognized that BLS was a replicable program. And since it was created to be on a much smaller scale than HBW’s other major projects – meaning the HBW Director could have minimal involvement – an annual or biannual BLS could fit relatively easily into HBW’s larger calendar of programming.

BLS themes were chosen for a variety of reasons: Mississippi was where HBW began; Kansas authors and sports figures reflected HBW’s institutional home at KU; women are understudied; and film adaptations allowed HBW to explore the exhibit multimedia in a new way. Additionally, as with all HBW programs, BLS was an opportunity for members of the HBW student staff to collaborate, learn, refine their research skills, and develop professionally.

Project Activities, Team, and Participants

With ten BLS exhibits completed in twelve years, we've learned from and revised our process with each iteration. A logical time to mount a BLS exhibit and tie into related programming and public awareness was February during Black History Month, unless the year's BLS theme lent itself to another date/time of year (i.e., Hispanic Heritage Month is September 15-October 15 annually, so we timed the 2022 BLS that focused on Afro-Latina/x writers to coincide). The following staffing requirements, budget, and timeline reflected our best practices for implementing this type of educational public program:

Sample Staffing Requirements:

Role	Responsibilities
Grad Student Coordinator	Leads research and vision, creates project work plan, oversees and directs Research Assistants (RAs), coordinates and executes all aspects of BLS, and drafts budget, all in consultation with the Faculty Advisor and HBW Research Project Manager
Undergrad Research Assistants (RAs)	Conducts research under the direction of the BLS Coordinator and Faculty Advisor, drafts written text and/or scripts, participates in design process, and other duties as assigned
HBW Director	Secures funding and Faculty Advisor
Faculty Advisor ¹	May help secure funding; oversees BLS Coordinator and RAs; provides scholarly, administrative, and technical guidance
HBW Research Project Manager	Manages budget and payments and provides administrative and technical guidance
Graphic Designer	Creates visual exhibit components and promotional materials

Sample Budget Breakdown:

Expense	Timing	Breakdown	Subtotal
Grad Student Coordinator	Summer	\$15/hour x 20 hours/week x 8 weeks	\$2,400
Grad Student Coordinator	Academic year	\$15/hour x 5 hours/week x 30 weeks	\$2,250
Research Assistants	Summer and academic year	\$12/hour x 20 hours/week x 30 weeks	\$7,200
Faculty Advisor	Academic year		\$2,000 ²

¹ The Faculty Advisor may be the HBW Director or another faculty member with expertise in the BLS area of study.

² If HBW Director is also serving as Faculty Advisor, this cost will be omitted.

Podcast interview subject or voiceover artist	Fall		\$500
Graphic designer and printing	Fall		\$1,000
Reception	February		\$700
Keynote speaker or panelists honoraria	February		\$1,500
Keynote speaker or panelists travel/lodging/per diem	February		\$3,000
TOTAL			\$20,550

Sample Timeline:

September-December (1+ year out)

- HBW Director and HBW Research Project Manager:
 - Solicit Grad Student Coordinator(s) proposals; proposals should include:
 - Rationale that describes:
 - Proposed BLS topic/theme
 - How the theme fits within HBW's and BLS's goals
 - How the theme aligns with the Coordinator's research interest(s) and the aims of HBW's archive
 - Coordinator's relevant leadership and project coordinator experience
 - Descriptions of proposed BLS exhibit deliverables, including suggested plans for these components:
 - Audio
 - Visual
 - Keynote address/panel
 - Reception
 - Campus collaboration
 - Timeline of deadlines and deliverables, including work division/assignments for Coordinator and RAs
 - Draft budget
 - Letter(s) of recommendation speaking to the Coordinator's scholarship on the proposed theme, leadership, and project coordinator experience

January-February (1 year out)

- HBW Director and HBW Research Project Manager review Coordinator proposals and select a Coordinator and theme
- HBW Director may solicit a Faculty Advisor to oversee the project

March-April (1 year out)

- Faculty Advisor, Research Project Manager, and BLS Grad Student Coordinator:
 - Collaborate to revise and finetune BLS work plan and timeline
 - Identify undergrad student staff to provide research and other support, as well as possible campus partners for funding and/or promotion

May-August

- Grad Student Coordinator, RAs, Faculty Advisor, HBW Research Project Manager:
 - Complete BLS research (i.e., select featured books/authors, create bibliography, select photos/images/graphics, etc.)
 - Draft written texts
 - Draft audio scripts
 - Identify and secure audio team (podcast interview subject, voiceover artist, audio editor, etc.)
 - Identify and secure graphic designer (campus staff, if available, or freelance)
 - Create preliminary plans for any on-site event(s) (i.e., keynote address, panel, etc.), including setting date(s), securing event space, speaker(s), etc.
 - Work with the HBW Director to solicit campus partnerships for funding and other support (university fiscal year is typically July-June, so aim to get requests in well before July 1st so administrators can include the funding in their fiscal year planning)

September-October

- Grad Student Coordinator, RAs, Faculty Advisor, HBW Research Project Manager:
 - Finalize and approve written texts
 - Finalize and approve audio scripts
 - Secure permissions from podcast participant(s) to share their photo, recording, and or/clips on our website and social media
 - Finalize on-site event(s) details, including speaker/panelists
 - If coming to campus and these people have relevant book(s) to sell, may want to partner with campus bookstore to sell books at event and also have author(s) sign books after the event
 - Confirm campus partnerships
 - Finalize and approve budget

November-December

- Grad Student Coordinator, RAs, Faculty Advisor, HBW Research Project Manager:
 - Turn written texts, images, etc. over to designer to create visual component(s)
 - Work with team to create audio component (i.e. record and edit podcast)
 - Convey BLS details to graphic designer to create promotional materials
 - Prepare social media, campus, and community promotional campaign
 - Determine how to capture event attendee numbers for HBW's email list

- Communicate and confirm event details with campus partners
- Order catering for light on-campus reception
- Contact campus/local press about features, how to get on campus/community calendars, lists of local/regional Black History Month events, etc.
- Make arrangements for speaker(s) travel and lodging

January

- Grad Student Coordinator, RAs, Faculty Advisor, HBW Research Project Manager:
 - Approve final visual component(s) and print
 - Approve final audio component(s) and prepare for release
 - Share promotional materials with campus partners, on social media, campus, and around community
 - Confirm on-site event(s) details, including:
 - Number of anticipated attendees
 - Speaker(s) travel/lodging/per diem arrangements
 - Speaker(s) honoraria paperwork
 - Secure permissions from speaker(s) to share their photo, recording, and or/clips on our website and social media
 - Reception menu and catering
 - Audio/Visual equipment and technical support
 - Event(s) setup
 - If selling books on-site, coordinate with bookstore and arrange for table, chair(s), space, wifi, etc.
 - Event(s) breakdown/cleanup
 - Complete a “run-through” of on-site event(s). Preparations include:
 - Draft a script for introductions
 - Set up any physical display either in the actual space or similar (do we have enough easels, is lighting sufficient, etc.) and address any issues
 - Test A/V equipment
 - Confirm food/drink table(s) placement and traffic flow
 - Confirm Book sales/signing placement and traffic flow
 - Confirm speaker(s) travel and lodging details

February

- Grad Student Coordinator, RAs, Faculty Advisor, HBW Research Project Manager:
 - Launch all BLS exhibit components
 - Attend and work all BLS events with duties to be assigned
 - Record number of attendees
 - Submit speaker, vendor, etc. receipts and bills to Research Project Manager for payment; follow up on payments/reimbursements
 - Continue to promote BLS on social media, campus, and around community

- Depending on components, determine BLS “close” date

March or after “close” date

- Grad Student Coordinator, RAs, Faculty Advisor, HBW Research Project Manager, and HBW Director meet for an internal evaluation meeting to discuss what went well, what could be improved, and anything to note for the future
- Grad Student Coordinator:
 - Record and file notes from internal evaluation meeting within HBW’s shared storage for internal archiving
 - Close exhibit:
 - Collect any printed materials and archive them in HBW’s physical archive
 - Create digital archive of exhibit components on KU ScholarWorks:
 - Screenshots of any online components
 - Audio file(s)
 - Video file(s)
 - Promotional materials
 - Event photos, etc.

BLS Challenges:

In the process of mounting ten BLS exhibits, we encountered a number of recurring challenges. Many of the difficulties are the natural ones that come from working with students. Continuity from one year to the next can be a challenge with student staff turnover. Additionally, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic impacted BLS in that it made other challenges faced by students more difficult: preparing grad school applications, childcare, preparing for an academic job market, shifting to working online vs. in-person, etc.

Project Outcomes

Overview of BLS Exhibits:

BLS 2022: Black Beyond Borders

Theme description:

This year’s BLS highlights Afro-Latinx authors and scholars, and for this online exhibit, we have compiled a list of books from Afro-Latina/x women writers. While this exhibit features texts from different cultures within the Afro-Latinx and Afro-Latin American diaspora, a common thread across the works is the tradition of reclaiming historical and cultural narratives. The selections all exemplify the power of fiction to redefine the cultural narratives and positions of Afro-Latinx communities in their respective societies.

The following list consists of historical fiction, short story collections, autobiographical fiction, and speculative fiction from prominent and promising Afro-Latinx women writers.

The authors represent nations and identities often ignored in studies of the Latinx/Latin American diaspora as well as the African diaspora: Afro-Puerto Ricans and Caribbeans living in New York, Afro-Haitians, Afro-Cubans, Afro-Mexicans in the United States, Afro-Dominicans, and Afro Brazilians. Moreover, the texts explore themes of revolution, femme freedom, and a sense of belonging as well as nonbelonging among Afro-Latinx women. As a result, these works foreground the voices of people at the intersection of multiple oppressions—racism, sexism, classism, violence, and xenophobia—within their communities. This list provides just a few examples of how Blackness is multifaceted and contains a multitude of experiences.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; podcast; keynote video clips; keynote promotional poster

Exhibit format:

Hybrid keynote speaker; interactive map exhibit; podcast

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Sandra Jacobo

Student staff:

Kai Hansen, Amar Kamalulrahim, and David Miller

BLS 2020: Black Writing in Reel Time

Theme description:

Countless works by Black authors find multiple lives through film adaptations which recontextualize the ways in which modern audiences engage with these narratives. From Charles Chesnutt's novel *The House Behind the Cedars*, and the 1927 film directed by Oscar Micheaux, to Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* and the 2017 film directed by George Tillman Jr., adaptations renew attention to works by Black authors and expand the discussion of a range of topics, including race, identity, coming of age, class conflict, and Black love. Black film, like Black writing, gives us history, past and present, real and reimagined.

Exhibit materials:

Timeline exhibit; interactive map exhibit; promotional podcast; panel video recording; panel promotional materials

Exhibit format:

Virtual panel discussion; virtual exhibit

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Christopher Peace

Student staff:

Mona Ahmed, Victoria Garcia Unzueta, Kai Hansen, and Alejandro Rangel-Lopez

BLS 2019: Researching While Black

Theme description:

Unlike past Black Literary Suites, the 2019 BLS “Researching While Black: The Project on the History of Black Writing at 35 Years” focuses on the history and achievements of HBW itself. This timeline and accompanying exhibit trace how HBW has grown from a small research unit at the University of Mississippi to a multi-project, grant-funded center. This BLS gives an in-depth overview of the creation and development of HBW’s primary research initiatives, including the Black Book Interactive Project (BBIP), the Black Literary Suite (BLS), and the Gems initiative.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; promotional poster

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Morgan L. McComb

BLS 2018: Reclaiming the Black Body, Women Writing Women

Theme description:

This exhibit is both a physical and digital interface acknowledging the primacy of physical violence against the female Black body. “Reclaiming the Black Body: Women Writing Women” seeks to open up a new conversation through works that tell of Black women making and remaking themselves. We use “reclaiming” here to refer to both the lived experiences and ideological space that allow for innovative and powerful expressions of female sexuality and power.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; list of selected reading; exhibit timeline; exhibit audio guide

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit with recorded audio guide

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Anthony Boynton, Morgan L. McComb, and Vince Omni

BLS 2017: Mississippi Renaissance

Theme description:

We coined the term “Mississippi Renaissance” to highlight the importance of Mississippi to Black writing and culture, and to place this movement in conversation with earlier renaissance efforts. This exhibit explores the commonalities in form, content, and symbols found in Black Mississippian texts and how they have changed over time. This audio and visual exhibit asks what are the historical social conditions of Mississippi that heavily influence Black writing and how is the classical meaning of “renaissance” applicable.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; exhibit audio guide

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit with recorded audio guide

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Matthew Broussard, Morgan L. McComb, and Anthony Boynton

BLS 2016: Sports Figures with a Kansas Connection

Theme description:

This visual and audio BLS exhibit highlights sports figures with a unique connection to the University of Kansas and to the state of Kansas. Notable figures include Wilt Chamberlin (Basketball), Charlie Tidwell (Track), Marlene Mawson ("Mother of KU Women's Athletics"), Marilyn Smith (Golf), and many more.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; exhibit audio guide

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit with recorded audio guide

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Matthew Broussard

BLS 2015: Kansas Authors Edition

Theme description:

Although not as popularly associated with African American literature as some other areas of the United States, Kansas has a rich tradition of Black writing in the Midwest. A number of important African American authors were born or lived in the Sunflower State, and their work often reflects their time in Kansas. This audio and visual exhibit highlights four important black writers—Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Frank Marshall Davis, and Kevin Young—with Kansas connections.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; exhibit audio guide

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit with recorded audio guide

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Meredith Joan Wiggins

BLS 2013: Histories of African American Short Stories

Theme description:

This collection showcases key features of short stories by Black writers and at the same time highlights the possibilities of digital technologies, especially text mining, to present information

about African American literature. The visual exhibit features an analysis of the works by Charles Chesnutt, Edward P. Jones, Richard Wright, Rudolph Fisher, Toni Cade Bambara, and Zora Neale Hurston.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Kenton Rambsy and Jeremiah Carter

BLS 2012: Wikipedia Edition

Theme description:

Wikipedia has become a prevalent site for information on a wide variety of historical events and figures, including African American literary works and authors. Nearly half of the books represented in our “100 African American Novels” project are documented on Wikipedia. Some novels, including Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, have extensively developed Wikipedia pages. This exhibit highlights the different ways that the world’s most famous online encyclopedia presents information about Black writers in our novel collection.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; exhibit audio guide

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit with recorded audio guide

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Goyland Williams and Kenton Rambsy

BLS 2011: New York Edition

Theme description:

The posters and recordings in this BLS reveal useful ways for considering the centrality of migration and location in African American literature. In the 23 novels featured in this exhibit, NYC—most often, Harlem—is a major location for each novel’s storyline. The prevalence of urban settings like New York City for novels suggests that writers view city environments as fertile ground for exploration in their narratives. Out of 19 novelists featured in this exhibit, 5 were born in NYC, 13 were living in NYC at the time of the novel’s publication and 17 called NYC a permanent residence for at least 5 years. Surveying this body of novels at one time gives readers new insights into African American literature and culture.

Exhibit materials:

Exhibit posters; exhibit audio guide

Exhibit format:

In-person exhibit with recorded audio guide

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Goyland Williams and Kenton Rambsy

BLS Audiences:

The first eight (2011-2019) BLS exhibits were held in-person on the University of Kansas campus either in Watson Library or the Kansas Union. Both spaces could accommodate an approximately month-long exhibit run time as well as an opening reception. Audiences for these first eight BLS exhibits were made up primarily of KU students, faculty, and staff, as well as members of the Lawrence-area community. Attendance at the in-person BLS opening receptions ranged from 50-100 people. We estimate that an additional 100+ people explored each exhibit in the weeks following this initial event.

When the BLS Team started preparing in 2019 for the 2020 project, the plan was always for the exhibit itself to be virtual in order to expand the audience outside of the KU campus and the nearby community. This turned out to be very timely given the global COVID-19 pandemic that made large gatherings nearly impossible. Held in another year, the 2020 BLS panel discussion would have likely been in-person at KU. However, *necessity became the mother of invention* and we pivoted to a panel held via Zoom, which in turn allowed us to invite panelists whose cost, whether due to their travel and/or required honoraria, would have been prohibitive for an in-person event. Approximately 100 people attended the online panel discussion.

The 2022 BLS combined a virtual exhibit and a hybrid keynote address, wherein the speaker connected via Zoom to an in-person audience gathered in the Kansas Union on KU's campus. "Black Beyond Borders" was an important addition because it expanded the project's inventory, which predominately features African American literature, secured new interdepartmental sponsorship, and it attracted virtual attendees from another country. The keynote was followed by an in-person reception for the gathered audience to engage with the Black literature topic and each other.

After each BLS exhibit "closed," the content was archived at KU ScholarWorks, a digital repository of the University of Kansas. More broadly, KU ScholarWorks contains scholarly work created by KU faculty, staff, and students. The repository makes important research and historical items available to a wider audience and helps assure their long-term preservation. Past exhibits continue to have life and find audiences years later, as can be seen in the following chart:

Year	BLS Title	Number of File Downloads (All Time)³	Number of Total File Views⁴	Top 9 Country Views (outside the US)⁵
2022	Afro-Latinx & Afro-Latino American Literature	183	323	Russia, Hong Kong SAR China, Singapore, Belgium, Brazil, China, Ireland, Germany, Finland
2020	Black Writing in Reel Time	583	360	China, Ireland, Russia, Kenya, Hong Kong SAR China, Sweden, Singapore, Belgium, France
2019	Researching while Black	272	533	Japan, Ireland, Finland, China, Germany, Russia, Canada, France, Hong Kong SAR China
2018	Reclaiming the Black Body: Women Writing Women	1,284	520	Ireland, China, France, United Kingdom, Finland, Germany, Canada, Russia, India
2017	Mississippi Renaissance	593	284	China, Singapore, Ireland, Russia, Finland, United Kingdom, India, Canada, Germany
2016	Sports Figures with a Kansas Connection	690	202	China, Ireland, Hong Kong SAR China, Russia, Germany, Singapore, Canada, France, Finland
2015	Kansas Authors Edition	778	336	China, Ireland, Russia, Finland, Hong Kong SAR China, Germany, Singapore, Canada, France
2013	Histories of African American Short Stories		281	France, Finland, Ireland, China, Russia, Hong Kong SAR China, Canada, Germany, Singapore
2012	Wikipedia Edition	215	226	China, Ireland, Finland, Russia, Singapore, Canada, Germany, United Kingdom, Hong Kong SAR China
2011	New York Edition	231	209	China, Ireland, Russia, Singapore, Canada, Germany, Finland, Indonesia, South Korea

³ As of 6/2024

⁴ As of 6/2024

⁵ As of 6/2024

BLS Press Links

The KU News Service covered some of the BLS exhibits which helped bring awareness on campus and in the surrounding community.

[Black Literary Suite 2017 will explore the Mississippi Renaissance | KU News](#)

[Project explores black writers with Kansas connections | KU News](#)

[Project explores written works of Kansas athletes | KU News](#)

[Selections from 100 Novels project to be displayed at Watson Library | KU News](#)

BLS on the HBW Blog

HBW's blog published regularly between 2011-2021 and was read by a national and international audience of students, faculty, and others interested in Black literature. Many BLS exhibits were promoted and/or recapped on the blog. In this way, even if blog readers couldn't visit the display or events in person at KU, they were still informed of the project and could review the exhibit once it was archived on KU ScholarWorks. Notably, the 2017 BLS utilized the blog to put out a call for sources from readers to create the Mississippi Renaissance Syllabus, an electronic teaching and learning resource.

BLS Student Outcomes

As with all HBW programs, BLS was an opportunity for members of the HBW student staff to collaborate, learn, refine their research skills, and develop professionally. Research Assistants were often majors from different departments, but they all learned about literature and developed their skills in research, writing/editing, communication, interpersonal collaboration, and in some cases working with technology. Grad Student Coordinators honed these same skills while they also gained professional experience in proposal submission, work plan creation, budget drafting, sponsorship requests, student worker supervision, event planning, project management, project assessment, and project archiving. BLS student workers have gone on to continue their work in the humanities in faculty positions, graduate school, study abroad programs, and more.

Project Evaluation, Impact, and Continuation

After each BLS exhibit closed, the team conducted an internal evaluation meeting to assess what went well, what could be improved, and anything to note for the future. This process allowed the team to learn from and build on each iteration to create better future products. Additionally, some of the same Graduate Student Coordinators worked on multiple BLS exhibits, especially early on, creating consistency and a more experienced knowledge-base over time, while helping to systematize our processes.

After ten exhibits, HBW paused work on BLS as major projects funded by NEH and the Mellon Foundation demanded attention from the Director, Project Manager, as well as student staff. This pause also coincided with fewer Graduate Student Coordinators who work in the field of African American and African Diaspora literature to lead the project at KU. In addition, HBW moved to its new institutional home at Indiana University Bloomington in 2024. This physical transition presented an opportunity to explore what BLS might look like in a new location: geographically,

administratively, technically, financially, etc. HBW's BLS will remain archived at KU on ScholarWorks and serve as documentation of HBW's legacy at KU and a testament to the many KU students who worked to bring these exhibits to life. HBW has recently worked on organizing and cataloging HBW's physical archive and has partnered with the Smith Center for the Digitization and Curation of African American History at the National Museum of African American History and Culture to digitize HBW's 40+ years of audio-visual materials. This undertaking makes clear that we've only begun to realize the possibilities to highlight more rich and varied research on Black literature in the years to come.